



# CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Follow Me

January 28, 2018

## **Part Four – Our Consecration**

**Dr. Steve Walker**

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There is nothing more appropriate than when God's people get to proclaim, declare, and worship the fact that our God is holy, pure, good, and trustworthy, and that's what we just did. I'm going to ask you to open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 6, and then just kind of sit tight. We're going to take a few extra minutes before we actually jump into the passage. While you're doing that, while you're giving, let me just kind of give another commercial.

This is that time of year when we start talking a lot about Life Groups and about encouraging you and helping you to find a place beyond Sunday morning to plug in at Canyon Hills. That begins today. There's some information in your bulletin about it. For today and the next couple of weeks, our whole Life Group team and staff are out there in the lobby at the Life Group counters, and they just want to help you figure out what the next step is if you're not in a group yet.

I know thousands of you are, but there are still a lot of you who have been waiting, maybe, till the new year, just getting through the holidays, and now it's time. So, I want to encourage you to get out in the lobby today before you run off and just say, "Hey, what is the next step? How do I start thinking about and investigating getting into a small group?" They will help you navigate, so please remember that and even start today.

Well, today is part four of a message series we've titled *Follow Me*. We wanted to take time out from our verse-by-verse study through books of the Bible we always do on Sunday mornings and just acknowledge something. We just needed to slow down and acknowledge that with the inerrancy and authority of the Scriptures all but being ignored and maybe even flat-out denied by many Christian churches today, the problem is that it's becoming more and more difficult to know what it really means to be a genuine follower of Jesus.

Christianity is suffering from a serious identity crisis right now. We're witnessing, right before our very eyes, a seismic shift from biblical discipleship to something that might be better termed or defined as progressive Christianity or cultural Christianity, which is drifting farther and farther away from what biblical Christianity and discipleship looks like.

You guys, it's devastating churches all around us. It's confusing believers, and I believe it's rendering the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, at its best, irrelevant, and at its worst, basically powerless to offer anyone hope or salvation. That's where we find ourselves today. Now, while it should grieve us, it shouldn't surprise us, should it? Scripture even warns us.

The apostle Paul warns us that there is going to be a day in the last days when people who call themselves Christians would have the appearance of godliness but the way they live denies its power. Paul warned, "Hey, as we get closer to the return of Jesus Christ, there are going to be many, many people who claim to be Christians, but the way they're living their lives denies that the gospel has any power to change anyone and to give anyone hope."

He ends that prophecy or warning in 2 Timothy 3 by warning the church to "**Avoid such people.**" Avoid people who give lip service to following Jesus: cultural Christians, who have some agreement with parts of the Bible, but boldly deny or maybe even conveniently ignore the parts of the Bible they don't agree with, as though that were an option for followers of Jesus. This series, I guess, is an attempt to try to set the record straight, to clarify again what the biblical terms of engagement are for the person who truly follows Jesus.

In part one, the first Sunday of the new year, we talked about *Our Conversion*. Jesus said unless we are born again, we are not his disciples, and so following Jesus requires a supernatural change of heart that's initiated by repenting of our sin and then confirming that repentance with our baptism.

That Sunday, we were glad to report to you last week, 30 people walked to the front of this room that Sunday, after each message, laid down their sin, turned to Jesus for forgiveness, and committed to be baptized. We've already seen 10 of them baptized so far, and there are many more to come in the coming weeks.

In part two, we talked about the *cost* of following Jesus. While the gospel is the good news that forgiveness and salvation are God's free gift of his grace for sinners who believe and repent, that salvation doesn't come cheap. Jesus said, "Unless you deny yourself and pick up your cross every day, you cannot be my disciples."

That told us that Jesus is not looking for *fans*; he's looking for *followers*. The cross we pick up every day is a daily reminder of the death Jesus died for us and for our sins, but that cross is also a reminder every day of our own death, the death of our rebellion against God, the death of our self-serving sovereignty and independence from God.

That's what Jesus is saying. He's saying, "Admiring me is simply not the same as following me." It's exciting that that Sunday, 75 people made their way to the front of this room at the conclusion of the message, committing to surrendering their own sovereignty, to pick up their cross every day, and to follow Jesus.

Last week, Pastor Jeff (brilliantly, I thought) preached part three. We called it *Our Commitment*. Jesus said, **"If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me, and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."** We learned and were reminded last week that following Jesus means everything we have, everything we own, and everything we are is now committed to him for the purpose of serving him and serving each other. There is a radical change of focus and purpose in the life of the follower of Jesus.

Last week, good news! Over 120 of you made a commitment to start serving Jesus. Today, we come to part four. We're calling it *Our Consecration*. The Bible says following Jesus requires something known as *consecrated living*. Being a disciple of Jesus is not an event. It's a lifestyle. It is a life of increasing holiness.

The words *consecration* and *holiness* are basically synonymous, and they mean to be separated from our sin and set apart to God for the purposes of moral purity. That's what God requires of those who call themselves Christians and followers of Jesus. You see, the character of holiness is supposed to cover over our entire Christian life, not just little pieces or parts of it.

Holiness is the foundation where all other Christian character is built. Think about it. Holiness is what purifies our love. It's what purifies our sacrifice and our service. Holiness is what purifies our worship and our prayer. Holiness purifies our fellowship with one another.

Think about this. What is more miraculous? What is more supernatural than the testimony, today, of a person who was living a life where things like vulgarity, sexual immorality, selfishness, anger, bitterness, materialism, violence, disrespecting authority, lying, stealing, or getting drunk just so we can relax, have fun, and loosen up...?

What is more powerful than a person who is walking away from those things and turning their life and desires toward things like self-sacrifice, generosity, sober-mindedness, unconditional love, gracious words, and forgiveness? What is more miraculous than that in our world today?

Here's what might very well be the main idea for this time in God's Word. *Holiness is the undeniable power of our faith for all to see*. Let me say that again so you just hear it clearly. We're about to remember that our holiness is the undeniable power of our faith in Jesus for everybody to see.

See, Paul prophesied there were going to be a whole bunch of people who call themselves Christians but they deny the very power of the gospel to have any power to change anyone. So, when we're living holy lives, it is a declaration, a proclamation, and an announcement that this gospel is real and it changes us.

If you think about it, holiness is the most powerful evidence that proves we're followers of Jesus. My fear is that we don't feel the importance of holiness anymore, not as much as we should. It doesn't hold the place it deserves in our thinking and in our discipleship. For way too many Christians today, there is too low of an opinion of holy living.

Remember what God's Word says about holiness in Leviticus 19? We're commanded to be holy. God's people are commanded to be holy simply and mainly because God is holy. In other words, as God's children, how we live is supposed to be a reflection of who God is. Be holy because God is holy! When you claim to be a child of God, you are claiming to be a reflection of your Father. So, be holy because we want the world to know God is holy, pure, trustworthy, and righteous!

Psalm 24 tells us that holiness is the only way we can have fellowship with God. See, sin and prayer cannot reside in the same heart. One always pushes out the other. In Ephesians 1, the apostle Paul tells us God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. God chose us to be his children so we can be holy and blameless in his presence.

In Hebrews, the writer writes that without holiness, no one will ever see God. It's impossible. In 1 Peter 1, the apostle Peter says holy living is the only way to confirm that we really love Jesus. It's the only way to really confirm that we love Jesus. We could say we love Jesus, but if our lives don't show it, then we don't have any right to say it. That's what 1 Peter 1 says. In 1 John 3, the apostle John says without increasing holiness, we have no assurance that we are saved from our sins.

I share those with you because I want the place and presence of holy living in your life to rise up the list where God puts it. My goal is not to make an idol out of holiness or piety or to dethrone Jesus and put holiness in his place. No, we know, don't we? Holiness can't save us. Holiness cannot pay our debt to God. God forbid anything I say going forward gives you the impression that somehow if we just are holy enough, then God will like us enough, forgive us enough, and save us enough. That's not what I'm saying.

I agree and echo wholeheartedly what J.C. Ryle writes in his epic volume on the topic of holiness: "Our purest works are no better than filthy rags, when tried by the light of God's holy law. The white robe which Jesus offers, and faith puts on, must be our only righteousness—the name of Christ our only confidence—the Lamb's book of life our only title to heaven."

What's going on here is the reality that positionally, for every believer, we are justified and forgiven by God's grace through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross as the ransom payment for our sin. Positionally, through faith in Jesus' death and resurrection alone, God declares us to be righteous and our sins washed away by his blood, not by something we did.

All of that happens instantaneously at the point of our salvation, when we repent of our sin and turn to the cross for Jesus' death and shed blood to pay for our sins. At that moment, God declares us righteous in his sight and our sins removed. That is where we are as believers: not because we did something but by the good grace and mercy of God and his gospel.

Now, practically speaking, now that we're adopted sons and daughters of God through Christ, we are called to be holy in our daily lives by the ongoing help of the Holy Spirit, who is

transforming us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. What does that mean, practically? Now we come to our passage. With your Bibles open and ready at 1 Corinthians 6, verse 9, let's stand reverently and respectfully for God's Word as he speaks to us now.

**"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."**

God, we ask now that you would open our eyes to a biblical, clear view of your holiness and our holiness. God, help us understand what it means to live holy lives today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Did you notice the past tense of our unholiness? Look at verse 11. Paul writes, "This is what you *were*." The implication there is that that is past. That is rearview-mirror living. What does it look like? What does increasing holiness and decreasing unholiness look like?

Let me warn you. What you're about to hear is going to sound extreme. What I'm about to say to you and teach you is going to feel impractical, and for some of you it's even going to sound fanatical. All the more reason that proves our desperation to really make sure that if we dare call ourselves followers of Jesus we had better make sure we know what God says that requires.

It's going to sound extreme and radical because the version of modern-day Christianity has watered this down so much that when we go back to see what it really says it shocks us, but it hasn't changed. It has always been this. How important is it for many of us today to just remember what God says is required of calling ourselves his children, followers of his Son?

So, let's get practical. What does increasing holiness mean?

1. *Love what God loves*. The psalmist says, "**Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold.**" This means as we're increasing in holiness we love God's Word. We love God's people, flaws and all. We love the gospel of Jesus. We love the cross of Jesus. We love the blood of Jesus, and we love the resurrection of Jesus, because that's what God loves.

We love things like biblical, monogamous marriage between one man and one woman for life and in the confidence of our divinely appointed gender given to us at our birth mercifully by God. We love human sexuality and all of its joy and pleasure in the safety of the covenant of biblical marriage.

It means we love the God-given sanctity of every human life, inside as well as outside of the womb. It means we love and care for the poor and the disadvantaged, which translates to the fact that we love to be generous and sacrificial in our giving that helps to take care of the widows and orphans in our world. We even love our enemies, evidenced by leaving the judgment and revenge to God and praying for their salvation.

In Matthew 5, Jesus said, "**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.**" Think about that. Increasing holiness paves the path to contentment and real happiness. That's just the opposite of what the world keeps screaming at us. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness and holiness, for they will truly be satisfied." Holiness and happiness cannot be separated.

2. *Hate what God hates.* In the same psalm, Psalm 119, the psalmist writes, "**Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way.**" We hate things like racism, prejudice, and injustice. We hate hypocrisy and the deceptive insanity of political correctness. We hate the degrading perversion of human sexuality. We hate violence and lies.

We hate the New England Patriots. Wait a minute. I don't know how that got in there. I think my admin typed that in there. It's biblical, though. I think it's biblical to hate them. Jesus did say, though, "**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**" I don't know how you could be pure in heart and love... That's another... We'll just wait. Jealousy is a terrible thing, isn't it? We hate what God hates.

3. *Mourn over our sin.* It saddens us. "**Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**" A sure sign that we're increasing and growing in holiness is that we find ourselves quickly convicted over our sin. The evidence of that is our willingness to humbly ask God for forgiveness and ask those against whom we have sinned for forgiveness.

Growing in our holiness requires that we are quick to recognize our sin for what it is and to bring it to the cross as fast as we can to where our forgiveness is found, and to go to the people against whom we have sinned before they come to us and ask them for their forgiveness.

4. *Humble and patient toward others who sin against us.* "**Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another...**" See, one of the sure signs of increasing holiness is the lessening of our whiplash over other people's sins.

The one who is really quick to point out and condemn others' sin really doesn't think highly enough of their own sin. Let's never forget that our sin...my sin and your sin...is so serious that God had to die for it.

5. *Fear God more than man.* Solomon concludes his amazing Old Testament book, Ecclesiastes, with these words: "**The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments...**" There's the holiness. "**...for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.**" See, growing in our holiness means there's a lessening of the grip of the fear of what others think about our desire to love and follow Jesus the way he calls us to love and follow him.

We need to be getting to that point where it matters to us less and less how much people will ridicule, mock, or reject us for wanting to believe and live in the way Jesus invites us and saves

us to live. We're caring less about that because we care more about what God thinks. That becomes the fuel that motivates our holy living.

6. *Weather life's storms anchored to the immovable rock of God's holy promises.* What I mean by this is that when we're increasing in holiness, when the storms of life come, our lives don't become a shipwreck. Peter says, "**His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness...**" There's the holiness. "**...he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature...**" There's holy living.

**"...having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."** Look at that! You see, the holy life is not a trouble-free life, but it's not a life without a safe harbor, either. We have an anchor for our souls called *hope*, and it's not wishful thinking. It's hope that is anchored in what Peter says is the very great and precious promises of God, because when the storms of life start crowding in and the gloom of our suffering and our pain starts lowering and the clouds come down, it's often hard to see outside.

We get so much tunnel vision that we can't even imagine that there's anything but this anymore outside of our suffering, pain, and tribulation. Peter is saying when you get to that place, you have a rock: God's very great and precious promises to you who he has called his own. That is growing in holiness.

It kind of explains when we, sadly, experience that Christian who goes through a tough time for a period of time and they just say, "Forget it. God, you're not who I thought you were. You're not who I want you to be. I'm done." Increasing in holiness anchors us to his promises.

7. *Worship Jesus with our lives, not just with our singing.* You see, I think we've mistakenly convinced ourselves that what we just did for 20-30 minutes was worship. It was worship; this isn't a trick on you here. But it's a 30-minute sliver of our worship. What do we do with the rest of the minutes?

Here's what Paul says: "**I appeal [beg] to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies [lives] as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.**" Let your eyes focus on that for a minute. Worshiping God with our bodies, with our whole life, means we worship God with our eyes. What we allow ourselves to look at, stare at, and watch is an act of worshiping God...or not.

It means we worship God with our ears. What and whom we listen to is a spiritual act of worship now to God...or not. We worship God with our tongues, our mouths. What we say and how we say it is now an act of worship to God...or not. We worship God with our minds. What we dwell on, believe, read, and accept as true is our spiritual act of worship now...or is it?

We worship God with our feet. The places we go and the places we don't go are now acts of worship. Our hands... How we do our jobs at work, how we serve Jesus in our church is a spiritual act of worship now or not. We even worship God with our stomachs. What and how

much we eat and drink becomes an act of worship. All of life is an act of worshiping God now. The issue is...*is our life a holy act or an unholy act?*

The world is absolutely desperate. The world is still wondering, "Is God real? If he's real, what's he like? Does he care? Is there hope?" The main way for the world to get answers to that is from us, and it starts with how we live. It has to go past just our words. It has to translate into our lives. That is the undeniable evidence of the power of our faith in Jesus. The world is desperately wondering, "Is God real?" and the best way to confirm that is to live in such a way that he is.

I knew this topic would require us being blunt and as forthright as we can because we're not hearing this anymore. Our opinion of holiness has come down too far. There are too many of us who got to a certain point of holiness in our lives and we said, "Eh, holy enough. Good enough, right there. Changed some things, not doing some things, but you know what? Right here is good enough." No, to be a follower of Jesus Christ requires an ongoing transformation into the likeness of Jesus until we see him face-to-face.

I've mentioned just seven things I think give evidence of increasing holiness in our lives. There are many more. I wish we had time. Because I believe in the power of God's Word and the Spirit who speaks to us, I wonder if just one of those has stood out to you and you're thinking in your heart, "Oh yeah. I need to grow right there." I wonder if one of those seven was more poignant to your heart this morning.

Let me tell you, this was brutal, studying this all week. I couldn't escape it. I felt completely unworthy to even stand here and give a message like this. All week, all I could think about is, "I don't hate the things God hates enough. I do find myself loving the things of God more, but I'm allowing the things God hates to just creep ever closer, just tolerating it a little more, just not letting it bother me anymore." I felt like God was saying, "Stop it. You're laughing at the wrong things. You're crying at the wrong things."

I don't know what it is for you, but I think the only appropriate response today is... Before we leave, would we just bow our heads? Can we just sit quiet, just for a minute? Don't run around. Don't rearrange the sock drawer. Just stay put for a minute and take a breath. I think maybe out of these six messages, this may be the one that impacts every single person sitting in this room who calls themselves a follower of Jesus.

What is it that you need to take to the cross right now? What sin, what attitude, what behavior do you need to take to the cross, to kneel down and denounce as sin, evil, and wicked in your life, in your heart, and lay it down in humble confidence that Jesus died for that sin? Would you take it to him right now? Just between you and him, in your prayer time, go there. He invites us to come there right now.

Now what needs to take the place of that? As we put off the old way and the sin, we're called to put on something in its place. As you remain humble and kneeling before the cross, what do you need to ask God's power and courage to change, to do, to replace the old with the new? What is



it? This is the beautiful, miraculous power of the gospel. It changes our desires. What do you desire to be more like Christ in? Ask for that right now.

O God in heaven, thank you that in Christ, you make all things new. We praise you, God, for your mercy, patience, and unfailing love. Thank you, God, that there is nothing we can do to make you love us less and there's nothing we can do to make you love us more. You love us with a perfect, unfailing love.

God, our prayer today is that this would be a church filled with people who live like that, who are a reflection of your holiness, who are a beautiful example and evidence of the undeniable power of your gospel to change us. O God, I pray that we would be less concerned with what the world thinks about us and more concerned with what we think about you and what you think about us.

God, take our hearts today and grow us. Change us. God, may we never water down the place of holiness in our lives. Forgive us, God, for doing that, and replace that with a new joy, a new happiness, and a new contentment as we draw closer to you. In Christ, in holiness, amen.

Now, if the truth be known, for some of you this made sense to you in your head, but you struggle to feel it and understand it in your heart because there has never been a point in your life where you've stepped over the line, where you've repented of your sin, and where you have said, "Okay, I surrender. I admit I'm a sinner and I need God's forgiveness." You've never come to the cross and said, "Here is my sin. Forgive me, change me, and save me," and then allowed Jesus to be the Lord and Savior of your life.

I'm not saying you don't believe in God. I know many do, but remember, Jesus isn't looking for fans. He's not looking for admirers. He's looking for followers. If you've never done that, I pray today that you would believe and repent of your sin today. That's what these people standing here are about. They want to just help you understand what it means to accept Jesus and turn your life over to him. Before you leave this room, I pray you'll come up and just say, "Hey, that's me. Where do I start?"

Others of you, you're facing a tough week this week. Maybe you have some things you're looking ahead to and you're thinking, "I don't know what this is going to mean." If we can pray with you about that before you go, we would love to do that as well.

God bless you. Thanks for being here. Bring your Bibles next week. We'll be in part five. We'll see you then.